

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7684

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 2224

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS UNCINCEUR SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS,PFOR,JO,US,SA

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE

REF: JIDDA 2962

SUMMARY: RIFAI BRIEFED ME ON A RECENT EXCHANGE OF COMMUNICATIONS WHICH JORDAN HAD WITH PRINCE FAHD. FAHD'S REPLY TO JORDAN'S LETTER ASKING FOR THE \$300 MILLION DOLLARS WAS THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED A PHASED APPROACH WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THAT SAUDI ARABIA REMAINED COMMITTED TO THE \$300 MILLION DOLLAR FUNDING. FAHD TOOK SHARP EXCEPTION TO RIFAI'S LONDON STATEMENT. RIFAI SAID KING HAS SENT A FURTHER MESSAGE TO FAHD SAYING THAT IF JORDAN IS TO BUY U.S. MISSILES, IT WILL NEED FIRM FINANCING FOR THE NEARLY \$800 MILLION WHICH SUCH MISSILES WILL COST AND THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF SAUDI ARABIA BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE SUCH FINANCING, KING HOPES THAT SAUDI ARABIA WILL DEPOSIT THE \$300 MILLION TO JORDAN'S ACCOUNT. MESSAGE REPEATS KING'S GRATITUDE FOR SAUDI GENEROSITY. MESSAGE ALSO INDICATES THAT RIFAI'S LONDON STATEMENT DESIGNED TO TAKE HEAT OFF SAUDIS AND IN DOING SO HAD INCURRED U.S. DISPLEASURE OVER ISSUE OF HISTORY OF PRICING. RIFAI HAS CONFIRMED THAT JORDANIANS ARE NOT TALKING TO THE PRESS, AND THAT STORY REFTEL POSSIBLY PUT TOGETHER FROM BITS AND

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PIECES OF OLD STORIES AND ARTICLES FROM WASHINGTON, LOCAL

AND ISRAELI PRESS. RIFAI REMINDED ME THAT CONTRACTS
WILL EXPIRE IN FOUR DAYS. END SUMMARY.

1. CONTINUING MY CONVERSATION WITH RIFAI EARLY LAST
WEEK IN WHICH I HANDED HIM A MEMO ON THE COST QUESTION
AND COMPLAINED TO HIM ABOUT HIS LONDON STATEMENT, I
REPEATED MY UNDERSTANDING WITH THE KING ON CONTINUING
JORDANIAN INTEREST IN A U.S. SYSTEM FINANCED BY SAUDI
ARABIA. I ALSO TOLD HIM OF MY DISCUSSION WITH THE
KING IN WHICH WE BELIEVED " SOME PROGRESS" HAD BEEN MADE
IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SAUDIS.
RIFAI SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD ABOUT THIS AND WANTED US
TO KNOW THAT JORDANIANS WERE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT
A PHASED OPTION IF IT MEANT THAT THE SYSTEM WHICH THEY
WERE BUYING WAS NOT WHAT THEY HAD WORKED OUT WITH THE
U.S. I TOLD RIFAI THAT IT WAS PREMATURE FOR HIM TO
MAKE REMARKS LIKE THAT AND THAT HE SHOULD COOL IT.
THE U.S. AND THE SAUDIS WERE STILL DISCUSSING THE
PROBLEMS AND THAT WAS THE KING'S RIGHT TO ACCEPT OR REJECT
WHATEVER MIGHT BE PROPOSED BUT I HAD NO
PROPOSAL TO TAKE TO HIM TODAY. FURTHER RIFAI SAID THAT
THEIR OWN DIRECT CONTACTS WITH THE SAUDIS WERE SOMEWHAT
AT VARIANCE WITH OURS. THE KING HAD SENT A LETTER T
PRINCE FAHD LAST WEEK VIA THE JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR.
THE LETTER SAID IN EFFECT THAT JORDAN WAS GRATEFUL
FOR WHAT SAUDI ARABIA COULD PROVIDE, THAT WITHOUT
LARGER FUNDING IT COULD NOT BUY A U.S. SYSTEM THE
COSTS FOR WHICH WERE FIXED, AND THAT JORDAN HAD MADE
PUBLIC STATEMENTS RECENTLY WHICH WERE DESIGNED TO TAKE
ANY HEAT OFF THE SAUDIS. JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR,
ACCORDING TO RIFAI, MET WITH PRINCE FAHD FOR OVER AN
HOUR SOME DAYS AGO. FAHD HAD AUTHORIZED THE AMBASSADOR
TO TELL THE KING ON BEHALF OF FAHD THAT THE OFFER OF
\$300 MILLION STILL STOOD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
EARLIER JORDANIAN-SAUDI AGREEMENT IN ADDITION, FAHD
MENTIONED THAT HE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING WITH THE U.S.
A PHASED APPROACH IN WHICH SAUDI ARABIA WOULD PAY
FOR THE FIRST PHASE AND THE U.S. WOULD SEEK FROM ITS
CONGRESS FUNDING FOR THE SECOND PHASE. THE FAHD REPLY
APPEARED TO BE CAREFULLY DRAWN, ACCORDING TO RIFAI'S
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EXPLANATION OF ITS CONTENTS TO ME, TO AVOID ANY KIND
OF FINAL TURN DOWN WHILE AT THE SAME TIME AVOIDING
ANYTHING MORE THAN A HINT THAT THE SAUDIS WERE PREPARED
TO LOOK BEYOND THE \$300 MILLION. THE FAHD REPLY ALSO
TOOK RIFAI AND HIS LONDON STATEMENT STRONGLY TO TASK
FOR ITS ATTACKS ON SAUDI ARABIA.

2. RIFAI SAID THAT JORDANIANS, AFTER REVIEWING THEIR

AMBASSADOR'S TALK, SENT FAHD A REPLY MESSAGE FROM THE KING. THEIR REPLY AGAIN MAKES CLEAR JORDANIAN APPRECIATION FOR SAUDI GENEROSITY. IT ALSO STATES THAT JORDAN CANNOT CONSIDER PURCHASING A U.S. SYSTEM WHICH DOES NOT MEET ITS NEEDS -- I.E. THE \$800 MILLION SYSTEM -- AND CANNOT DO SO WITHOUT SAUDI FUNDING. HOWEVER, IF THE SAUDIS ARE NOT PREPARED TO FUND MORE THAT THE \$300 MILLION, JORDAN WILL HAVE TO LOOK ELSEWHERE. THE LETTER REPEATS JORDANIAN REQUEST FOR AN EARLY DEPOSIT OF THE FUNDS.

3. RIFAI THEN TOLD ME HE HAD EXAMINED THE MEMORANDUM WHICH I HAD LEFT WITH HIM ON THE COST. HE SAID THAT THERE HAD EARLIER BEEN SOME MENTION OF SOME \$255 MILLION AS THE COST FOR HAWK MISSILES. HE WAS AFRAID THAT IT WAS THIS FIGURE WHICH HAD FORMED THE BASIS FOR A DISCUSSION WITH KING FAISAL DURING ONE OF HIS VISITS TO JORDAN OF THE \$300 MILLION FIGURE. RIFAI DID NOT DISPUTE OUR CONTENTION THAT HE WAS DEAD WRONG IN SAYING THE PRICE HAD RISEN WHILE THE CONGRESS WAS CONSIDERING THE ISSUE. I TOLD RIFAI THAT IT WAS MY RECOLLECTION KING FAISAL WAS HERE WILL BEFORE EVEN A FINAL DECISION HAD BEEN MADE ON THE 14 BATTERY SYSTEM AND INDEED HIS ASSASSINATION HAD ANTEDATED THAT DECISION. IF THE JORDANIAN SHAD MENTIONED THIS FIGURE TO THE SAUDIS, THEN THIS FIGURE BORE NO RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNDERSTANDING FINALLY WORKED OUT BETWEEN US. IN FACT THE IRONY OF IT WAS THAT SUCH A FIGURE WAS PROBABLY MORE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE 6 BATTERY SYSTEM WE HAD ORIGINALLY DISCUSSED, WHICH THE LSRAELI LOBBY IN CONGRESS WANTED TO LIMIT JORDAN TO HAVING, AND WHICH THE JORDANIANS HAD REJECTED IN THE SUMMER OF 1975.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7685
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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DEPARTMENT PASS USCINCEUR SPECATE EXCLUSIVE

4. I THEN TOLD RIFAI THAT THERE WAS NOTHING MORE I COULD PASS ON TO HIM ABOUT OUR POSITION, BUT I HOPED TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO THE KING AND TO HIM SOON ABOUT WHAT MIGHT DEVELOP. RIFAI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS AND THEY WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING WHAT WE HAD TO SAY WITH INTEREST. IN ANY EVENT, THEY FELT THE DECISION ABOUT HAVING TO GO TO THE SOVIETS WAS "OUT OF THEIR HANDS" SINCE IT CAME AS A RESULT OF THE FUNDING RESTRICTIONS PLACED ON THEM BY THE SAUDIS. I TOLD RIFAI THAT I HAD TO SPEAK FRANKLY WITH HIM. IF JORDAN WANTED TO USE THAT ARGUMENT, IT WAS MOVING TOWARD NATIONAL SUICIDE AND WAS TRYING TO BLAME ON SOMEONE ELSE ITS OWN DECISION. IT WAS LIKE A MAN WHO HAD NEVER BEEN ON SKIS BEFORE GOING TO THE TOP OF THE MOST DIFFICULT SLOPE AND STRAPPING THEM ON AND THEN HEADING DOWN WITH A NEAR CERTAINTY OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN. IF JORDAN WERE TO DECIDE TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION, THE RESULTS AND CONSEQUENCES WERE THEN OUT OF MY HANDS AND CERTAINLY OUT OF THE HANDS OF HIMSELF AND THE KING. IT WOULD BE THE REACTIONS IN THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA AND ELSEWHERE TO GOING TO THE SOVIETS THAT WOULD DETERMINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN. I DID NOT WANT TO PAINT THE PICTURE ANY DARKER THAN IT IS, BUT HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND MY OWN FEELING THAT THE RESULTS WOULD BE VERY BAD AND THEY WOULD BE UNCONTROLLABLE IN TERMS OF ANYTHING WHICH JORDAN COULD
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DO ABOUT IT.

5. RIAI SAID JORDAN APPRECIATED THAT AND IT WAS A FATEFUL DECISION. HOWEVER JORDAN ALSO HAD TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FUTURE WITHOUT ANY AIR DEFENSE. THIS TOO BROUGHT ON DIFFICULT AND UNCONTROLLABLE PROBLEMS WITH JORDANIAN MILITARY, WITH JORDAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY AND WITH ITS FUTURE AS A MODERATE STATE IN THE AREA.

6. I TOLD RIFAI THAT WE APPRECIATED THAT POINT AND WERE DOING WHAT WE COULD TO INSURE THAT JORDAN GOT AN EFFECTIVE AIR DEFENSE DECISION. OUR REMAINING THAT THE DIFFICULT DECISION WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE FACED.

7. COMMENT. THE RECENT EXCHANGES BETWEEN JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA CONTINUE TO LEAVE OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER ACTION ON A JOINT U.S.-SAUDI POSITION. RIFAI AFFIRMED AGAIN EXPLICITLY AND CLEARLY THAT JORDAN

WANTED TO BUY A U.S SYSTEM AND THAT JORDAN WOULD MAKE
NO OFFICIAL STATMENTS ABOUT THE HAWK DEAL IN ORDER TO
SEE WHAT THE U.S. COULD COME UP WITH IN ITS TALKS WITH
SAUDI ARABIA. AFTER THAT AND IF IT DID NOT WORK OUT,
THEN JORDAN WOULD HAVE TO STATE PUBLICLY WHAT
ITS POSITION WAS BEFORE GOING TO THE SOVIETS. END COMMENT

8. I RAISED WITH RIFAI THE ARTICLE WHICH HAD APPEARED
SOURCED TO AP IN THE SAUDI ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER
(REFTEL). RIFAI SAID THEY HAVE MADE NO FURTHER STATE-
MENTS SINCE HIS OONDON INTERVIEW AND WILL NOT DO SO.
HE COULD NOT PREVENT THE LOCAL NEWSPAPERS FROM DREDGING
UP INFORMATION FROM OLD PRESS STORIES AND FROM
WASHINGTON LEAKS. NOR COULD HE CONTROL WHAT AP WRITES FROM HERE.
HE THEN TOLD ME THAT YESTERDAY'S JERUSALEM POST CARRIED AN
EXTENSIVE STORY FROM WASHINGTON SAYING THAT HE AND THE KING
WERE SPLIT ON THE HAWK ISSUE, THAT HE HAD DELIBERATELY MISLED THE
SAUDIS, THAT I WAS INSTRUCTED TO PROTEST HIS LONDON PRESS
CONFERENCE AND SEEK AN IMMEDIATE APOLOGY AND SO FORTH.

9. I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THE AP STORY IS
ENTIRELY BASED ON LOCAL PRESS AND OTHER NON-JORDANIAN LEAKS
WHICH IS NOTORIOUSLY UNRELIABLE. MUCH OF IT DREDGES UP OLD OR
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WELL KNOWN POINTS AND IS FAR LESS SPECIFIC THAN STORIES NOW
COMING OUT OF WASHINGTON. NEVERTHELESS, I REPEATED
TO RIFAI AGAIN OUR HOPE AND EXPECTATION THAT JORDANIANS
WOULD CONTINUE TO KEEP QUIET ON THE HAWK QUESTION.
HE PROMISED THEY WOULD DO SO THROUGH THE MAY 1 DEADLINE.
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